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U.S. Department of Agriculture

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Wildlife Services

National Wildlife Research Center
4101 LaPorte Ave.
Fort Collins, CO 80521-2154

Main telephone number

(970) 266-6000
FAX: (970) 266-6032

Information Services

(970) 266-6017
FAX: (970) 266-6010
email: nwrc@aphis.usda.gov

Animal Care

(970) 266-6204

Research Programs

Birds: (970) 266-6133
Mammals: (970) 266-6084
Product
Development: (970) 266-6159

NWRC Field Stations

Berkeley, CA
(510) 643-5893
FAX: (510) 643-5098

Bismarck, ND
(701) 250-4467
FAX: (701) 250-4408

Gainesville, FL
(352) 375-2229/2230
FAX: (352) 377-5559

Hilo, HI
(808) 961-4482
FAX: (808) 961-4776

Logan, UT
(435) 797-1348
FAX: (435) 797-0288

Millville, UT
(435) 245-6091
FAX: (435) 245-3156

Olympia, WA
(360) 956-3725
FAX: (360) 534-9755

Sandusky, OH
(419) 625-0242/0098
FAX: (419) 625-8465

Starkville, MS
(601) 325-8215
FAX: (601) 325-8704

Philadelphia, PA
(215) 898-3092
FAX: (215) 898-2084

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INTRODUCTION

National Wildlife Research Center—Mission and Location

The mission of USDA's Wildlife Services Program (WS) is to provide Federal leadership in managing problems caused by wildlife. The National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) functions as the research arm of WS by providing scientific information on the development of socially acceptable methods for wildlife damage management. As part of WS' strategic plan to improve the coexistence of people and wildlife, it has identified four goals: (1) developing methods, (2) providing wildlife services, (3) valuing and investing in people, and (4) enhancing information and communication. WS is dedicated to helping meet the wildlife damage-management needs of the United States by building on the unit's strengths in these four key areas. This annual NWRC research highlights report is structured around these program goals.

NWRC is committed to conducting applied research that addresses the needs of the WS program and its stakeholders as identified in a

1996 WS Program National Research Needs Assessment. NWRC currently supports 18 multiyear, cross-disciplinary projects directed at those identified research needs. Four projects scheduled to end in fiscal year (FY) 2000 were reviewed to gauge their success in achieving their expected objectives. Reviews were conducted at either NWRC field stations or at NWRC headquarters in Fort Collins, CO. Review participants included Center and outside scientists, WS regional and State directors and wildlife specialists, and numerous stakeholders. NWRC uses the input of these participants to develop new 3- to 5-year projects with specific goals, objectives, and milestones that relate directly to the research needs identified in the 1996 WS Research Needs Assessment. During 2001, the WS program expects to conduct its third Research Needs Assessment, upon which future Center research will be based. In early 1999, NWRC moved into its new headquarters, the Wildlife Science Building,

on the Foothills Research Campus of Colorado State University (CSU) in Fort Collins. Construction of the Wildlife Science Building is a remarkable accomplishment of the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) toward achieving the WS/NWRC Master Plan. During 2000, NWRC, APHIS, and the General Services Administration made considerable progress toward building additional facilities in the NWRC Master Plan. The bid documents for construction of the Animal Research Building Support Wing and the associated outdoor animal research facilities were completed with a ground-breaking for these facilities expected in early 2001. Upon completion of the Master Plan, NWRC, with its nine regionally based field stations, will be the only wildlife research complex of its kind in the world devoted entirely to providing new science-based solutions to wildlife damage and associated health and human safety problems.